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Journalist butchered

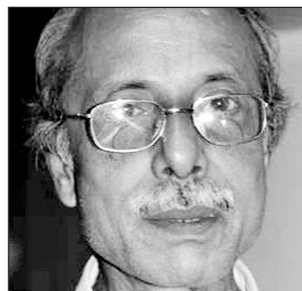
I was stunned to read about the exceptional demonstration in Rajshahi by journalist Jahangir Alam Akash who remained standing for two hours, his eyes and mouth fastened with black cloth and his hands tied up behind with a rope. A banner over his chest asked the question: who is the next target?

However, the small size black and white photo in the DS was a point of disappointment.

On this occasion even the news coverage by the DS national desk was not adequate. When I say this, it occurs to me that in the none- too-distant future this same demonstration by journalist JAA will be focused upon through the lenses of some foreign journalists and find place in the gallery of world press photo journal-

ism. It is indeed sad to see such poor coverage of such a significant event.

Your editorial boldly upheld the role of the journalists as defending the people's right to know (informa-



Murdered journalist
Dipanker Chakrabarty

tion). In elaborating this role the quality of information, that is, "to voice the truth" has been addressed. This is the danger point. For, once upon a time

many of us believed that there are some things that even money cannot buy, for example love, truth justice etc. This is a myth of yesteryears. Money can purchase all these things today.

Every Sunday your newspaper provides an exclusive page on "Law and our Rights" It is time that a column or a section in this page be devoted to issues and implications of freedom of the press. A column titled "did U know" with a list of two or more names of eminent journalists lost on account of unnatural death could be added. In giving such coverage the DS and we, the readers, would be paying due homage to all the journalists who lost their lives while "defending the people's right to know".
Farida Shaikh, On e-mail

what they have achieved in this short period.

There has been allegation of human rights abuse against RAB. But I would rather sacrifice some degree of civil rights, if that can make Bangladesh better in terms of law enforcement. However, I feel extremely sad that the opposition instead of hailing the efforts of RAB, is labelling it as a "killing machine" and wants disbanding of this organisation. What RAB is doing is going after the criminals throughout the country. How can that be bad? How can the opposition oppose such an initiative? How can the AL go against the popular concept, when the people of Bangladesh have embraced RAB and what it stands for? Now is the time that both the opposition and the government work together, not work against each other. The AL should support the RAB initiative. The country must come first, before power!

Anonymous
On e-mail

Hijab

While I definitely do not think that Hijab blocks the minds of women (having seen so many very intelligent, smart and socially active women who wear hijab), I cannot stop myself from politely objecting to those women (or men) who suggest that many women take it up at their own will. I think the inference behind such an opinion is wrong. When a girl is born in a Muslim family, she is usually taught the Islamic way of life from a very early age. This essentially plants the seed of religious belief deep inside her, which she follows all through her life, often without questioning it. Many who I asked why they used hijab had given me a very simple answer -- because Allah asked women to do so. You cannot argue with faith. I can live with that. But I cannot by any means agree that hijab makes a woman less attractive, hence allows her to focus on her mental faculties as opposed to pursuing anything involving her physical beauty. In reality a pretty face below a hijab can look even prettier, especially when it separates a girl or woman from the mass.

What I am opposed to is not the faith or wearing hijab but the reasoning that some people are trying to come up with to give this tradition a better look.

Shuja Rasheed
Toronto, Canada

what good friends do. No matter how far they are, they are always close to your heart. You start laughing right away, and talk about early days, the present, and share some future plans. I cleared my heart out, and in a few minutes we both felt good. My friends commemorate my graduation. They celebrated my wedding, came to see my first born child, and even when their physical bodies cannot make it, their hearts always do.

Iffat Zia
On e-mail

Coconut cultivation

The government has a commendable plan of planting about ten million coconut saplings in the country. But we will not be able to get full benefit from this expensive project unless necessary infrastructure is in place to ensure proper growth of the plant by application of manure and in some cases irrigation regularly. It takes about ten years in Bangladesh for the coconut tree to bear fruits, as against only 3-4 years in Thailand.



PHOTO: AFP

Cricket in Ramadan

I love cricket and love to see Bangladesh play strong opponents. But playing cricket in Ramadan does not make sense. The cricket crazy people of Bangladesh would not enjoy cricket in its true spirit when played in this month.

I would like to draw the attention of BCB to this important issue.
Tariq M. Abd'allah
USA

Education policy

At the launch of the Edexcel 'Bangladesh Studies', the State Minister of Education said that each of the three kinds of education in Bangladesh (English-medium, Bengali-medium and madrassah) had certain weaknesses and that the government was planning to solve this problem by 'minimising the differences between them.'

My experience over the last 40 years does not make me optimistic about the success of similar plans here. Putting 3 different types of education into a sack and giving them a good shake is no guarantee that one, unified and glorious system will emerge. The wrong diagnosis and the wrong treatment could kill the patient.

The English-medium schools that I know do NOT fail to teach their pupils the language, history, culture and citizenship of their country and aim to turn their pupils into 'foreigners'. I could write an article about this -- in fact, I have. I am sure also that some prestigious Bengali-medium schools are furious at the

Let us not imagine that a measure of freedom in education will bring down the forces of chaos upon the nation. Rather the reverse. A government determined to be Big Brother can end up with the education system in big trouble.

Angela Robinson
Principal of The British School in Dhaka

Lady Curzon's wish

This has reference to the letter from Mr ABM Shafiqul Islam published on 13 October '04. The writer has aptly described Taj as the "most sublime monument of imperial love." Nehru described it as the "dream of beauty". Age after age, the poets, literary figures and connoisseurs of beauty and art have used their imagination to describe in their own style the eternal glory of love as depicted on the white marble mausoleum built at Agra.

It is said that Lady Curzon after, having seen the Taj on a moonlit night, exclaimed in her bewilderment that she was ready to embrace an immediate death if someone

US presidential election

I watched the three US presidential debates very intently because I believe the future of everyone on this planet depends on its outcome. If Bush wins, the world will be a far more divisive and dangerous place. If Kerry wins, the chances for world peace are better.

There are many strange things happening in the US elections. The agenda of the Bush campaign is one. Bush is an upholder of good, conservative Christian values. His opponent has been labelled as a representative of the extreme left, an ultra-liberal. In making the distinction, the Bush camp is also injecting a value judgement, that conservative Christian values are good and liberal, left views are bad and they are basing this value judgement on religion! The reason? There is a hardcore of Americans comprising significant part of the population who believe in this agenda and the Bush campaign is aiming at this constituency. To this hardcore Americans, it matters little how well articulate Kerry is in the debates; how solid are his facts; or even how patriotic he is, having won three purple hearts in Vietnam. They are willing to give Bush the nod despite leading the US

to invade Iraq on false premises and losing focus on terrorism by leaving Osama bin Laden free in Afghanistan. So he could invade Iraq where Saddam had no links with terrorists. They would vote for Bush on his Christian credentials.

It is unbelievable that Bush still has a very good chance of winning the election in world's only superpower nation. With this credentials, he would lose miserably in any other country.

An awareness of history is what scares me, for a force is working to start a new "crusade" using the war on terrorism and 9/11 as excuses. The experience of a Muslim visitor to the US at the hands of Homeland Security and Immigration would attest to what I am trying to say.

Shahjahan Ahmed
Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka



PHOTO: INTERNET

accusation that they do not teach English properly. And I have been reliably informed that some madrassahs have teachers of Science and English who are doing an excellent job.

Schools are not factories, nor can they be run by formulae. A good school is a bit of a mystery actually -- and a fragile plant that can too easily be crushed. If we knew what made a good school, we could put it in a bottle and sell it. In countries all over the world, different ways of running schools have evolved and, with a light and wise touch, that can work out just fine. It also seems to be what parents like and, with no government help, the different systems can monitor one another, spur one another on to higher standards and everyone can benefit. Teachers are usually creative people and different types of schools can pioneer a certain variety of syllabuses, choices of books, methods of discipline, extra-curricular activities etc. from which all can benefit. Already, cross-fertilisation between schools is bringing many blessings.

Of course, a good government must ask for registration, set standards and parameters and appoint inspectors.

promised to erect such a memorial on her grave!
SR Shaheed
DOHS Banani, Dhaka

Friends

There are few words in our everyday vocabulary that carry more weight than others. Like, parents, love, faith, death, hate, and friends. It is a shame if you live your life without having some good friends. Friends have an amazing influence. They are people you can talk to about things that you would not share with anyone else. Friends listen without judging you, and they always say exactly what you need to hear. They are honest and loving. And most importantly they make you laugh. Laugh out loud for silly things, things that only friends can relate to.

I am blessed to have some good friends in my life. They come from different parts of the world, with different backgrounds, and yet they know me more than anyone else in my life.

The other day a friend called me after a year. She lives in Bangladesh, and thus our distance get in the way of seeing each other often. We exchanged e-mails, and pictures, but when I picked up the phone and heard her voice it seemed she was right there. That is

Our country is very fertile and we are used to getting fruits without much effort. Just by planting a sapling we think we can get fruits for years without applying nutrients. We must change this mindset. In Ramna Park, Suhrawardy and Zia Uddyan a large number of coconut trees are standing like tooth-pick with few branches and fewer coconuts. This is an example of sheer negligence and apathy. I suggest that about 5,000 coconut trees be planted in the city's parks and Sangsad area with proper arrangement for their healthy growth. Existing cartoon like coconut trees should be phased out.

Major QS Ahmed (retd)
On e-mail

RAB and the opposition

Its brings sweet music to my ears when I read that criminals in jail are not willing to risk bail from magistrate and end up dead. All because they are afraid of RAB. The people of Bangladesh have long lost faith in police. RAB is doing every day what our law enforcement agencies have not been able to do. Even if RAB was inaugurated only last year, it has had a major impact on the crime situation. I congratulate RAB for

Terrorism

I read with great interest the article on the subject by a good friend, Brig.Gen. Sakhawat (Rtd), in one of the internet editions of Dhaka dailies. The contents of the article are indeed very frightening. In my opinion we have still not gone far enough to indicate the alarming rate of spread of this great evil since the most tragic events of 9/11 in New York. He has very skilfully touched on the subject, with the background and the way it is now affecting peace throughout the globe.

Z Rahman
USA

Non-student politics!

We are hostages to dirty student politics. Student leaders following their political guru's signals call sine die strike to get their so-called demands met. Their demands are never related to common students' interests. Student leaders raise issues of their own interest and to materialise them they call strike that blocks the normal educational process of the university. A few students enforced strike harms thousands of students.

Student politics in our country is dominated by non-collegiate students. Most of the student leaders of

the main student organisations are aged and passed their student life many years back. But still they are leaders of the students. These aged-non-students never feel students' sufferings, and as a matter of fact it is not possible for them to do so since they have forgotten when they were students.

Mohammad Abdul Hannan
MBA 38, IBA, University of Dhaka

Don't question my patriotism!

I would not question people's patriotism whether they write praising or criticising Bangladesh. It reminds me of Bush telling Americans that God is on their side! The point I would like to make here is that Bangladesh should not be India or Pakistan specific! After thirty-three years of independence, we should stop blaming others for our miseries. During these thirty-three years, we had military despots and incompetent politicians who did nothing to change the course of Bangladesh. Looting and kickbacks are prevalent right at this moment! Year after year, Bangladesh has been named as the most corrupt country in the world. The poor have become poorer and the rich have turned richer! Law and order has taken a turn for the worse.

Isn't it time to wake up? I would criticise our own competence first and then go after Indians or others. We need competent people who would be able to negotiate with our neighbours with a cool and intelligent mind. Political games would not take us anywhere!

Dev, On e-mail

Global politics and Islam

Here I would like to refer to Mr. Sirajul Islam's letter (October 17, 2004) where he did not support the attacks on the installation/facilities that are either owned by the UK/US or any western power who supported the UK/ US for invasion in Iraq and Afghanistan. I also agree with him. But why are Muslims doing so?

Actually Islam does not permit it. But have you thought about the prevailing world situation? All western powers are supporting unlawful acts of the UK/US against Muslims. Even the UN has got no role in this respect.

The invaders have admitted that the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan were due to wrong information by their intelligence services. But what action was taken by the UN? Nothing! Only statements.

The same is true about Palestine for more than 50 years. So, the Muslims have been driven to the wall.

Under the circumstances, some Muslim clerics have been compelled to issue such religious edicts -- although this is not permitted or acceptable in Islam.

MA Bashar
Dhaka

Role of politicians

I deeply appreciate your publishing the article "Development Bangladeshi Style" written by Mr. Chieko Yasuda (DS 17 October, 2004). I thank Mr. Yasuda for this article which depicts clearly our present status and how things went wrong. For Bangladesh, village was the focal point for the development process! The civil society and NGOs are presently complaining that Union Parishads (UP) have already become ineffective and very soon one crore people living in the capital will become a liability when their sources of income shrink badly.

I am sorry to inform you that Bangladesh emerged with the legacy of economic exploitation for almost two hundred and fifty years. The Politicians, Civil Servants and Military Leaders in Independent Bangladesh came from the families (usually large) where economic hardship was seen as "Shame". So during the tenure of "Democratic Government" or the "Martial Law

Government" it was found that people in the government became influential persons either through exploiting power or accumulating wealth. They have never done for the nation what was expected of them.

Golam Ashraf
DOHS Baridhara, Dhaka

Rickshaws

It has been proven that the rickshaws are the main cause of unbearable traffic jam in the city. The rickshaws and rickshaw-vans observed a dawn to dusk hartal on Saturday protesting the eviction drive against illegal rickshaws. We saw very few jams on that day.

There was a rhythm in the city on Saturday as there was no traffic jam except signal jams in some points. Commuters believe that it is better to walk than remain standstill in a suffocating traffic jam and it is possible to reach the destination faster on foot than riding rickshaws in a city of traffic jams.

The capital is the mirror of a country and speed is the main thing

of it. But it is not possible for anybody to reach anywhere in this metropolis in due time because of traffic snarls. Thousands of working hours are lost every day because of traffic jam. It is not possible to attract foreign direct investment if it takes two hours to reach Motijheel from Farmgate.

According to sources, there are four to seven lakh rickshaws of which only 87,000 have valid licenses. These illegal rickshaws are contributing to tremendous traffic jam in the city mainly on narrow roads and alleys where there are neither traffic signal posts, nor traffic police.

The capital with limited roads and thoroughfares is no longer in a position to bear the burden of excessive load of vehicles, but it is learnt that about 100 illegal rickshaws enter the city every day to add to the snarl-up. Moreover, seasonal rickshaw pullers come to the city during the holy month of Ramadan, ahead of Eid, to earn some extra money spreading traffic jams to new areas.

Traffic jam is a must when slow

moving vehicles like rickshaws, rickshaw-vans and motor vehicles run side by side.

So it is time to ban rickshaws in the city. Some people argue that there should be an alternative resettlement project before banning rickshaws. I do not agree with it because it is a silly argument that people will come to the city from village to run rickshaws and the government will provide jobs for them only because they are rickshaw-pullers. It has become a fashion to demand that if anybody takes shelter in a slum, the government would not evict him/her without resettlement.

Rickshaw-pullers should return to villages and work as labourers in the agriculture sector.

Mehedy Hasan
On e-mail

Future of BANGLADESH



PHOTO: AFP

The renowned journalist, columnist and political analyst, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, has said that Bangladesh has now become a political colony of Pakistan and economic colony of India. He urged the political leaders to save the country from this impending danger. He said, "The leaders should understand that it is no more the question of their power-mongering; it is the question of the very existence of the country. I have doubts whether Bangladesh will remain a secular country."

Chowdhury was speaking at a congratulatory meeting at Royal Canadian Legion Hall in Toronto recently. Bangladesh Social Forum organised the meeting in which a cross-section of people from the Bangladesh community in Canada took part. It is worth mentioning that for the first time people from Bangladesh, despite their divergent political affiliations and religious beliefs, took part in this meeting.

Now, there are many among the Bangladeshis and Bangladeshi Diaspora who do not like Gaffar Chowdhury. But I think what he is saying about the country's future deserves attention.
Ekrum Kabir, Gulshan, Dhaka